

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4326

Do you have constituents with Osteoporosis?

Dear Colleague,

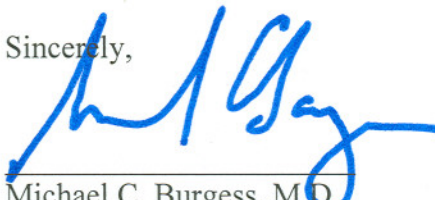
Government run prescription drug plans often leave many patients without access to needed medications. Before voting on H.R. 4, please consider the hurdles that osteoporosis patients have had to overcome in order to get coverage for Fosamax in New Zealand, a country that runs a strict, government structured drug plan.

Fosamax was approved for treatment of post-menopausal osteoporosis by the New Zealand regulatory agency, MEDSAFE, in September 1995. An application for Fosamax coverage for patients with osteoporosis was made that same year to the Pharmaceutical Management Agency of New Zealand (PHARMAC). Almost 5 years later, in February 2000, PHARMAC finally provided coverage for Fosamax, but limited it to patients with two prior osteoporosis fractures and very low bone mass (three standard deviations below the mean normal value in young adults: a 'T-Score' of -3.0).

Ten years after approval of the drug, in 2005, the criteria for getting access to Fosamax were slightly expanded. They now require patients to meet the following criteria: either one previous osteoporotic fracture and a bone mineral density T-Score ≤ -2.5 ; or a history of two significant osteoporotic fractures; or a T-Score of ≤ -3.0 ; or one osteoporotic fracture and either the patient is over 75 years of age or is too frail to undergo a bone mass density scan. By this point, you have already missed your golden opportunity to intervene.

In the U.S., greater than 90 percent of seniors in Medicare Part D plans have unrestricted access to Fosamax, needing only a physician's prescription to gain access to this medication that prevents bone fractures, rather than waiting until they have a bone fracture. Doctors and patients, not government bureaucrats, determine what drugs they need. "A Hundred Hours" is a good sound bite, but it's not worth jeopardizing seniors' access to needed medications. Vote for access to drugs, oppose H.R. 4. For more information, please contact Josh Martin at 5-7772 or josh.martin@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress